

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: This is the last amendment that I have that deals with a fairness and equity issue. This amendment, and you've got a handout that's just verbiage on a handout, that's a brief explanation of the situation. This amendment restores 50 percent only of the vetoed amount in the second year of this biennium in regards to community colleges. I was originally not going to pursue it for a couple of reasons. But then as all the details came in and we saw then what we had in front of us on 1189, I felt compelled to do so. First of all, a little background. In 1995, or last year, we passed LB 241, and it changed the formula for distribution of community college state aid. What we did is we said that community colleges need to have a higher weighted factor for heavy vocational courses, because that was the primary mission and goal of community colleges. We added the dollars, as the Legislature and the Appropriations Committee, so we would make it as revenue neutral as possible. The Governor again vetoed all of these monies, as well as all of the other areas, and again we overrode the first year, but not the second year. The community colleges originally did not ask for the dollars to 408 because...for various reasons, which I can get into if I need to. But at the hearings they did request to be treated equally. In the case of the budget you have before you now 50 percent of the override as given, and if you vote for 1189 you'll give the University of Nebraska 50 percent of their vetoed amount, which will be \$2 million. The committee added 50 percent, I believe, to the state colleges, and then to a group who didn't even ask officially for the dollars either, the private schools, they added \$75,000 to the scholarship program. Again, I do not disapprove of any of those. But we need to understand and I believe that the members of the body do understand that community colleges are a very important part of higher education. And if we are going to treat higher education by adding back 50 percent of the vetoed amount, I do not see the consistency of saying all but community colleges, all but community colleges will get 50 percent back. To me, if we're going to treat higher education the same way, you have to treat higher education the same way, you can't say that state colleges and university is more important than community colleges, because we all know that, as higher education is changing, more and more are being asked and are...is happening and being asked of the community colleges. What this amendment would do was treat...is to treat community colleges as fairly as the other higher educational institutions. And this would restore half of